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(54) Abstract Title
Gaming machine display with pseudo-games

(57) A player standing to either side of a unit 3 can operate the machine by inserting credits and operating buttons 6. When no user is playing the game a timing mechanism within the unit 3 will cause the wheels to rotate and stop in the manner of pseudo-games, which will act to attract potential players. A player using a machine can, after inserting credits, choose the moment when he operates the buttons 6 to play a real game after the timing mechanism has caused performance of one or more pseudo-games.

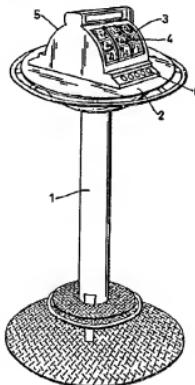


Fig. 1

The claims were filed later than the filing date but within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995.

At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

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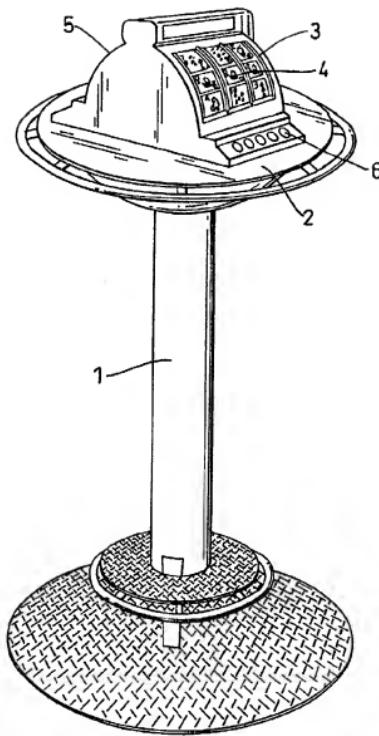


Fig. 1

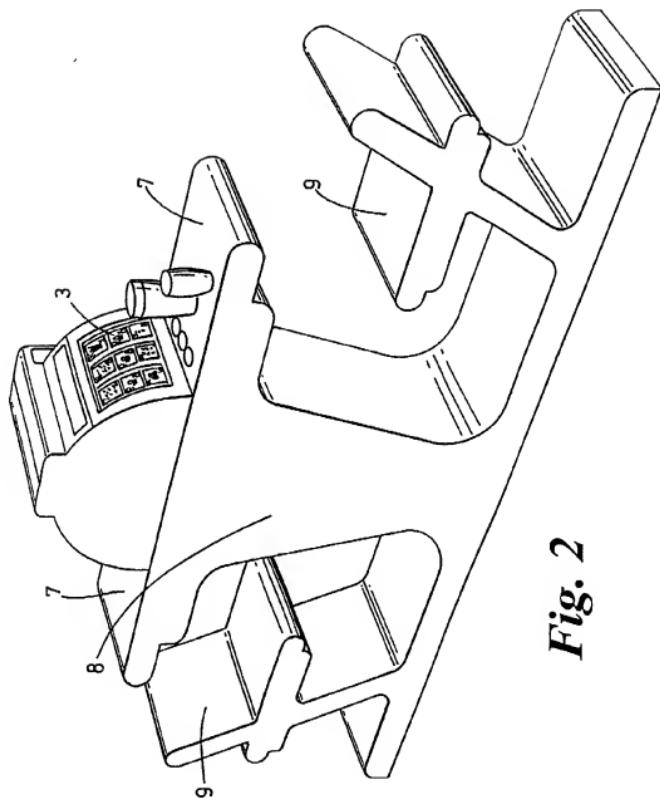


Fig. 2

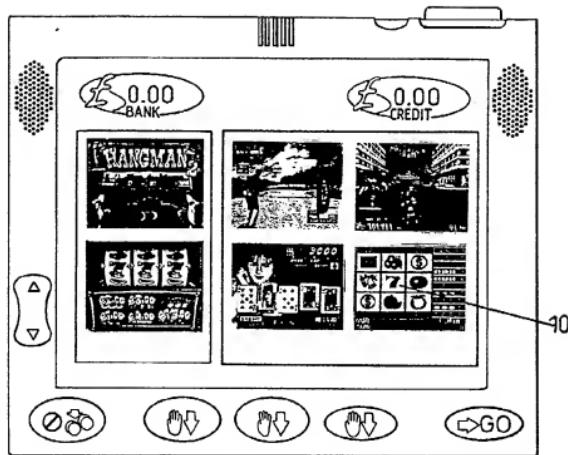


Fig. 3

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"Improvements relating to gaming machine display"

One type of gaming machine is referred to as an amusement-with-prizes machine, particularly known as a fruit machine. Machines of this type have a number 5 (usually 3) of reels or drums, or equivalents such as endless bands, hereinafter referred to generally as "reels", which are spun and then stop in a variable manner to reveal a combination of symbols across the reels in display windows. Certain combinations result in prizes, 10 usually monetary, being awarded. Instead of actual reels or drums a video display illustrating a similar implementation may be used or there may be a video display (or displays) of an alternative type of game where an array of symbols is varied each time the machine is played.

15 It is an object of this invention to provide such a machine which has features to attract potential users to play games on the machine.

According to this invention there is provided a gaming machine having a display of a number of symbols in an array 20 which will be varied to a new array by operation of a control mechanism within the machine, wherein certain ones of all possible symbol arrays indicate a prize condition, a timing mechanism to cause actuation of the control mechanism, in the nature of a pseudo-game, to create a new 25 array at predetermined timed intervals, and an actuation device to enable a user to assign a "stake" for the play of a game, such that a prize will be awarded if the user

actuation causes a prize condition to be displayed by the array of symbols, the actuation device being operable only if the user has applied credit to the machine, and the timing mechanism causing actuation of the control mechanism 5 after a predetermined interval of non-use by the user even if credits are still present in the machine.

With such a machine the actuation of the control mechanism by the timing mechanism on a regular basis will create a regular movement of the symbols, thus attracting 10 potential users. The user then has the option of playing the game (after the insertion of credits) at a time when the user believes that the chances of winning a prize may be enhanced, after the playing of a pseudo-game by the machine itself. Furthermore, the user can then delay play 15 of a further real game, if he wishes, after the further "play" of more pseudo-games by the machine itself. Ideally the gaming machine will be constructed such that "hold" and/or "nudge" features are available to a user even after a pseudo-game.

20 There is some advantage in combining separate games into one machine housing for independent play by separate users as this reduces the space occupied by such machines. It is an object of this invention to provide such space-saving whilst also providing an enhanced attractiveness of 25 a potential user to the game illustrated on the machine.

As a further modification the gaming machine can therefore be constructed such that two displays of symbols

are provided on separate areas of the machine and variation of the array of symbols on one display by actuation of the control mechanism during a pseudo-game will cause duplication of the array of symbols on the other display, 5 the two displays being associated with separate actuation devices for operation by independent users.

This enables two users to use the machine within the same time period. Although only one user can play at any instant, the other user will be able to see the results of 10 real game plays or pseudo-game plays whilst the other user is in control of play of the machine. There would be a feature to detect from which side credits have been applied. The system could allow simultaneous play from both sides. In this case, it can be arranged that the 15 reels would spin in opposite directions for each successive game, to avoid one side being perceived as the dominant one. Furthermore, the reel bands could be configured so that, when available, hold and/or nudge features would be beneficial to both players.

20 When "video" type displays are used, multiple machines could be enhanced by linking the displays such that they are synchronised. A display where a player or a user had utilised a hold or nudge feature would be re-synchronised with the other display on the next available game.

25 The invention may be performed in various ways and a preferred example thereof will now be described, with

reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a dual gaming machine of this invention as a free-standing unit;

5 Figure 2 illustrates another form of a dual gaming machine of this invention as a seated unit; and

Figure 3 shows an alternative form of display for use with either of the machines of Figures 1 or 2.

10 The machine shown in Figure 1 incorporates a stand post 1 supporting a table 2 into which is mounted a gaming unit 3 incorporating rotatable reels or drums 4. The symbols on the reels 4 will be visible not only from the side illustrated, but also on the opposite side 5 of the gaming unit 3. In use, a player standing to either side of
15 the unit 3 can operate the machine by inserting credits and operating buttons 6. When no user is playing the game a timing mechanism within the unit 3 will cause the wheels to rotate and stop in the manner of pseudo-games, which will act to attract potential players. A player using a machine
20 can, after inserting credits, choose the moment when he operates the buttons 6 to play a real game after the timing mechanism has caused performance of one or more pseudo-games.

25 In the unit shown in Figure 2 the gaming unit 3 is mounted into a structure defining a pair of table surfaces 7 mounted on a support 8. Seats 9 are provided for use by

the players, who can play the game in the same manner as that described for the unit in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 3, the display can be a video display rather than reels and can, for example, illustrate 5 a number of different games 10 to be played by the user.

The unit shown in Figure 3 may be configured as a "back to back" unit. It may also be configured such that multiple units located at a single site all play the same game. When a player interacts with one unit, the remainder 10 operate automatically, but re-synchronise to show the same game outcome at the next pseudo-game.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming machine having a display of a number of symbols in an array which will be varied to a new array by 5 operation of a control mechanism within the machine, wherein certain ones of all possible symbol arrays indicate a prize condition, a timing mechanism to cause actuation of the control mechanism, in the nature of a pseudo-game, to create a new array at predetermined timed intervals, and an 10 actuation device to enable a user to assign a "stake" for the play of a game, such that a prize will be awarded if the user actuation causes a prize condition to be displayed by the array of symbols, the actuation device being operable only if the user has applied credit to the 15 machine, and the timing mechanism causing actuation of the control mechanism after a predetermined interval of non-use by the user even if credits are still present in the machine.
2. A gaming machine according to claim 1, wherein "hold" 20 and/or "nudge" features are available to a user even after a pseudo-game.
3. A gaming machine according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein two displays of symbols are provided on separate areas of the machine and variation of the array of symbols 25 on one display by actuation of the control mechanism during a pseudo-game will cause duplication of the array of symbols on the other display, the two displays being

associated with separate actuation devices for operation by independent users.

4. A gaming machine substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
5. Any novel combination of features of a gaming machine as described herein and/or as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB 0206614.0
Claims searched: 1 - 3

Examiner: Tom Sutherland
Date of search: 23 July 2003

Patents Act 1977 : Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance
A		DE 4316653 A (BALLY WULFF)

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^v:

G4V

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC⁷:

G07F

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report:

EPODOC, WPI, JAPIO